

## Monday, August 20, 2007: Charrette Final Presentation

### Goals

- Commercial Revitalization
- Neighborhood Preservation
- Walkability

### Guiding Principals

- Build to street
- Narrow streets
- Street trees
- Sidewalks
- On-street parking
- Mix land use
- Lower speeds

### Existing Conditions

- No easily walkable areas along the New Hampshire Avenue Corridor as opposed to Old Takoma
- Sligo Creek Trail connects the Corridor to bicycle trail systems in Montgomery and Prince George's County.

### Concept Development

- Commercial Nodes: create identities and focus development around the intersections at Eastern Avenue and Ethan Allen Avenue.
- Multi-way Boulevard: increase pedestrian safety and continue auto accessibility.
- Roundabout: increase pedestrian safety and used as a gateway feature. (ex. Hyattsville)
- New cross streets: develop new connections for commercial and residential areas.
- Green Nodes: improve access to Sligo Creek and Takoma Branch at their intersections with New Hampshire Avenue.

### Recommendations

#### Multi-way Boulevard

- It is the "Centerpiece of the Plan". It should be the top priority because it will be the greatest catalyst for other redevelopment.
- The boulevard layout plan is 4 through lanes, 2 side medians with trees, 2 local lanes, parking (either side), curb, green strip or tree boxes with trees, and sidewalk.
- New Hampshire Avenue is currently 6 lanes, all defined as 'fast lanes'. The boulevard plan would have 4 fast lanes, lessening the crossing distance from ~80 feet to ~50 feet.

- Local lanes will provide on-street parking and access to residential and commercial sites. The positioning of side medians will also prevent cut through traffic.
- Buses will use the fast lanes to keep public transit speeds efficient and the access lanes slow.

#### Circulator Bus

- A new bus line servicing the Corridor by connecting the site of the planned transit center at the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard with the Ethan Allen Gateway, Maryland Gateway, Eastern Avenue, Takoma Metro Station and Old Takoma.

#### Ethan Allen Gateway

- The focus for redevelopment is on the properties south of the intersection.
- The 'Shoppers Plaza' would retain the grocery store building. Other buildings can be built along the front of the site, up to the sidewalk and facing the street. The proposed buildings are 3-4 storey mixed-use with retail on the ground floor and housing above. The current access road connecting the Shoppers grocery store to New Hampshire Avenue would be transformed to a main street with on-street parking and new mixed-use buildings along the street, leading to the grocery store. Parking for all of the shops would be in the back or in the on street access road.
- The proposal for the current shopping plaza on the southwest corner of the intersection is for two 3-4 storey mixed –use buildings fronting the street with parking in the rear. A new open space plaza is drawn adjacent to the sidewalk in-between the two buildings and across from the new main street that connects to the Shoppers Food Warehouse on the opposite side of New Hampshire Avenue.

#### Maryland Gateway

- This commercial node would be more service oriented than retail compared to the Ethan Allen Gateway.
- The existing Bank of America building is an asset because of its office space capacity that can accommodate an estimated 300 businesses or 1000 employees.
- Commercial properties along New Hampshire Avenue were redesigned with mixed-use buildings fronting the street and some with residential along the outside of the properties with parking decks in the middle.

#### Takoma Branch

- Unbury (daylight) the Takoma Branch creek to create Sligo Mill/Poplar Mill Park with a walking path parallel to Ray Road.
- Build up a buffer of trees and shrubs to hide the Pepco substation.

#### Sligo Creek

- Create access points to Takoma Park Neighborhood Park at the intersection of Sligo Creek and the Corridor.

- Add wildflower meadow/park/raingarden features to both sides of New Hampshire.
- Redevelop commercial properties as green building family pub.

#### Other Areas

- Northeast corner of Ethan Allen Gateway: consolidate the commercial sites to develop small shop corner building and a more pedestrian friendly gas station.
- Landscape a tot lot and community cutting garden (for cut flowers) in the existing splitter island on Prince Georges Avenue.

#### Implementation

- The implementation details will be submitted as part of the draft plan document to the City in Fall 2007 – they will also be available once the presentation is posted on the web – expect it the week of August 27<sup>th</sup>.

#### Questions and Answers

##### How does it happen?

- Growth and redevelopment will happen through market forces. The plan developed through the Charrette will guide developers, residents, business owners, and government officials in facilitating redevelopment and growth supported by all stakeholders. Government bodies may also use the plan as a basis for providing assistance and/or incentives for catalyst projects to make the vision viable.

New Hampshire Avenue is a thoroughfare. Does the plan handle existing traffic and the potential increase in traffic that an increase in housing density would bring?

- The team had syncro data from state highway for the entire avenue. The team also compared the plan for a boulevard with existing boulevards that have similar volumes of traffic and are successful. Numbers over the past few years show a reduction in overall traffic at many of the intersections. The capacity is not based on peak travel times and it is not meant to ease traffic during the peak time. New Hampshire Avenue currently does not handle traffic at peak times. The traffic data show that the boulevard will easily handle off peak hours traffic. In cases where the traffic pattern changes, users often adjust by making more trips at off peak times when there is more capacity. The team predicts that the plan will fit with a change in transportation behaviors that may have already begun. Planners for most urban areas accept congestion, rather than expecting free flow high speeds as providing the highest level of service. The trade offs are that the area will be very safe for pedestrians, which are given a preference over cars. This makes transit a more attractive option too.

Are there concrete examples of successful conversions to boulevards?

- Octavia Boulevard in San Francisco is a conversion from a freeway overpass that is slightly controversial (as not going far enough) but overall very successful.

Should we consider a streetcar line on New Hampshire Avenue now instead of retrofitting after the boulevard is built?

- A streetcar line would require additional ROW beyond the 150 feet needed for the boulevard.

If there is not enough existing ROW for the boulevard plan, how will it be acquired?

- The current zoning code requires that sites being redeveloped improve and dedicate or provide an easement of right of way 75 feet from the property line.

Why would State Highway Administration (SHA) fund a project that is counter to their traffic model that includes peak time capacity? Dennis German of SHA is asked to answer the question.

- When SHA receives the plan documents they will review them – it is too early a stage to say what will work and what will not.

How much does it cost and who's going to fund it?

- The costing of the project is not part of the scope. Funding strategies will be in the draft plan document.

How do you implement the green space plans at Sligo and Takoma Branch since residents have already tried to do so?

- They are concepts but they are feasible and reasonable and of course they will take a joint effort by the residents, city, county and other agencies.

Were businesses in the New Hampshire Avenue Corridor and stakeholders from the Prince George's side of the Corridor invited?

- Businesses and residents from both sides of the Corridor were invited to the Charrette through mail, email, or phone. City staff and Charrette team members went to New Hampshire Avenue businesses door-to-door in the weeks preceding the Charrette to discuss the Charrette process and gather information and comments.